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HOUSEKEEPERS' CHAT Monday, June 15, 1931.

(NOT FOR PUBLICATION)

Subject: "Meals and Middle-Age." Information from the Bureau of Home Economics, U.S.D.A.

Bulletin available: "Good Proportions in the Diet."

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Uncle Ebenezer glanced at the calendar and said, "Ho hum. It looks very much as if another birthday was rolling around in my direction. If I didn't know that I come from a line of long-lived ancestors, I might begin to get uneasy about all these birthdays piling up on me. But my grandfather lived to be ninety-five, you know, and my great-grandfather almost reached the century mark. People used to say that our family inherited a hale and hearty old age. But I believe that the secret of our long lives and good health was probably the way the womenfolks in the family fed us."

"Now there," said Uncle Silas, turning to me, "There is a fine idea for one of your radio talks. Why not give a chat on food after fifty? Lots of wives, who know all about feeding babies and planning proper meals for children, never give a thought to correct meals for the middle-aged. And how about urging more serious consideration of menu-making for grandfathers and grandmothers?"

I agreed. And I asked for suggestions of topics that should be discussed in such a talk.

Uncle Silas volunteered, "Well, you might explain this matter of growing stout at fifty or so. A lot of my middle-aged friends have begun taking on weight lately and have no idea why."

"And," said Uncle Ebenezer, "you might suggest that food habits as well as habits of living account often for the fact that some men are older at fifty than others at seventy."

"And how about adding something to the effect that many middle-aged breakdowns--so-called "overwork" cases, may be simply the result of disregarding the simple rules of good nutrition and health?"

Old age is not simply a matter of years. It is a condition of the body. Some people are old at fifty. Others seem young at seventy. It is all a matter of keeping the body fit. And food is one of the most important items in keeping fit. The first twenty or twenty-five years is a period of growth. After that comes a long period during which the body tends to maintain a constant weight. If the load of work is adjusted to the capacity of the human machine, and if the proper amount and kind of food is consumed, conditions for a long life and years of efficiency are ideal. But it is very important to stoke the furnace correctly.

Scientists experimenting with animal feeding have shown that old-age symptoms, such as a decline in vigor, can be modified by diet. Animals who were given a well-balanced diet, kept their youthful vigor much longer than their brothers and sisters who lacked certain foods. It is the same way with human beings. Many of the vague ills they suffer from are due to diet lacks. A lot of us struggle along through life, carrying on our work and not really sick, but not feeling as fit as we should. People in this fix never know the sensation of living life abundantly and efficiently. Then old age comes on early. Food should be a source of good health and well being -- not just a means of keeping alive.

In later life many of the frequent troubles are caused by infections of one sort or another. We realize today that a diet low in vitamins, especially vitamin A, makes people liable to infection. Plenty of vitamins, on the other hand, will build up a resistance to it. A proper supply of minerals is also needed for good health. So, it's well to remember, that our daily food all through life, has a lot to do with keeping fit at fifty.

Now this question of how much and what to eat in middle-age. Muscular activity naturally begins to decrease at this period of life. The strenuous exercise that was carried on at thirty begins to grow less, and naturally the need for fuel food also grows less. But habits of eating are still strong, and appetite probably persists. Along in the forties John may give up that daily game of tennis in favor of moderate exercise like walking, but he wants his hearty meals just the same because he is used to them. Here is the reason for that gain in weight that so frequently sets in in middle life. Those extra pounds are a sure indication that more fuel food is being eaten than is required, and that it is high time to cut down in quantity. For a long life, a sensible diet, greatly simplified in later middle age is best. Fewer rich dishes, meat in moderation, plenty of milk, eggs, fruit and vegetables. Eat smaller amounts of food, chew them well to satisfy the appetite, and drink plenty of water to keep the body in good condition.

Now after middle-age, when true old age sets in, other food problems arise. The internal processes of an aged person are considerably slowed up. Therefore, caring for any excess food becomes difficult and overeating may be decidedly dangerous. From sixty on, the body tends to lose rather than to gain weight. Aged people are likely to lead very sedentary lives so a small amount of food is all they need.

Foods to be used sparingly are rich sauces, cakes and puddings, pastries and fried foods. Hot rather than cold food is especially needed in chilly weather to keep the body comfortably warm.

Aged people should eat plenty of fruits and vegetables. If they have trouble chewing them, fruits may be given as juice or stewed pulp, and vegetables may be well cooked and mashed or strained and served in soup.

In many ways the diet for the aged is like that fed to children during the first five years or so. It consists of milk, eggs, fruit juices, cooked cereals and cereal puddings and strained vegetables. Simple meals are best, served at frequent intervals. The emphasis, of course, is no longer on building materials, as in childhood. And old people may depend on hot and stimulating foods like tea and coffee that are not allowed to children.

Meals for middle-age and after should be planned with moderation and simplicity as the keynote.

As a sample of a correct and sensible and delicious after-fifty meal, the Menu Specialist has planned a dinner for us today— good for everybody in the family, especially the aged people without facilities for good mastication. There are two recipes to go with it, but as we haven't time for both, I'll save one for tomorrow and depend on you to have your pencils ready then.

The menu begins with Ground Beef Broiled on Toast. Then, Scalloped Potatoes; Spinach; Toast; and, for dessert, Strawberry Ice-Box Cake.

All the family will enjoy the ground beef dish. It is a very simple one to prepare and has much the same fine flavor as broiled steak.

Four ingredients:

1 pound of ground raw beef
8 slices of bread
butter or other fat, and
salt and pepper to taste.

I'll repeat those four. (REPEAT).

Toast the bread on one side. Then butter the untoasted side and spread to the edge with a layer of the ground beef. Dot with butter or other fat and broil under a flame for about five minutes. Season with salt and pepper and serve at once with a garnish of parsley or pickles.

Tomorrow: I'll have the recipe for the ice-box cake ready for you. And since we're on the subject, we'll have a little chat about our ice-boxes and other refrigerators.

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